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PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON STANDBY ARRANGEMENTS FOR PEACEKEEPING

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of the Security Council's request for a report, at least once a year, on the progress made on standby arrangements with Member States concerning their possible contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations (S/PRST/1994/22). It covers developments since the submission of my previous report on the subject on 24 December 1996 (S/1996/1067).

II. CONCEPT

2. The concept of standby arrangements for peacekeeping operations remains as described in detail in previous reports. Its purpose is to have a precise understanding of the forces and other capabilities a Member State will have available at a given state of readiness, should it agree to contribute to a peacekeeping operation. Such resources may include military units, individual civilian and military personnel (e.g., civilian police and military observers), specialized services, equipment and other capabilities. The key element in the system of standby arrangements is the bilateral exchange of detailed information to facilitate planning and preparation for both the participating Member States and the United Nations. Information provided to the Secretariat is stored in a database and is used only by personnel within Headquarters.

III. CURRENT STATUS

3. As previously reported, 62 Member States had indicated, as of 30 November 1996, their willingness to provide standby resources totalling, inter alia, some 80,000 personnel that could, in principle, be called upon. As of 1 December 1997, 67 Member States had made such commitments, raising the total to some 88,000 personnel.

4. The participating Member States are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad,

China,* Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece,* Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania,* Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore,* Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia,* Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Of these 67 Member States, 50 have provided information on the specific capabilities they are prepared to offer. Finally, I am very pleased to report that 13 Member States, more than double the total since my previous report, have formalized their standby contributions through a Memorandum of Understanding: namely Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Denmark, Ghana, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, Ukraine and Uruguay.

5. The resources involved are shown in annex I to the present report. The total of 88,000 includes elements of different sizes, varying from infantry battalions to individual military observers, and covers the whole range of components envisaged for peacekeeping operations. The bulk of resources consists of infantry; there continues to be a need for additional resources to complement that number of infantry with the necessary logistic support, especially in the areas of strategic sealift/airlift, communications, multi-role logistics, transport, health services, engineering, mine-clearing and transport utility aircraft. In this regard, the Secretariat has been encouraging Member States having such assets, the "force multipliers" for peacekeeping operations, to include them in their pledges, to obtain a more balanced ratio between operational and support units. There is also a need for more civilian police personnel as a result of their increasing participation in peacekeeping missions. In this regard, the Secretariat has also been specially dedicated in encouraging Member States to provide more of this portion of their contribution to the system.

6. The grouping of the pledged resources outlined above, with their response time, is shown in annex II to the present report. Some 41 per cent of the confirmed standby resources have a response time of up to 30 days; 19 per cent have a response time of between 30 and 60 days; 2 per cent have a response time of between 60 and 90 days; the remaining have a response time of more than 90 days.

7. It is clear that much remains to be done, both to widen involvement in the standby arrangements system and to improve the availability of resources declared by Member States. In this context, the annual briefing of Member States, held this year on 29 May, yielded dividends in leading to declarations of intent from two countries, including one permanent member of the Security Council. It should also be noted that at its own request the Group of African States was briefed, on 13 November, on the concept and status of standby arrangements.

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* Denotes new participating Member States since last year.

IV. INFORMATION, PLANNING AND CONTINGENT-OWNED EQUIPMENT

8. The General Assembly, by its resolution 50/222 of 11 April 1996, authorized the implementation of a new procedure for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment. This procedure requires a contribution agreement (now retitled a Memorandum of Understanding) to be signed before the actual deployment of the contingent or resources to the mission area. Such a requirement may delay the process of rapid deployment. Thus, in the light of this mandatory requirement for future peacekeeping operations, the Member States that have already pledged to the standby arrangements system may wish to exchange in advance data required by annexes A, B and C to the Memorandum of Understanding on contingent-owned equipment (A/51/967), within the framework of the standby arrangements system. These data will be adjusted during the finalization of the Memorandum of Understanding, when a Member State eventually confirms its readiness to participate in a specific operation.

9. In order to meet this need, the Secretariat reviewed the questionnaire for contributing resources to the United Nations standby arrangements system. The new form, which is called a planning data sheet, consolidates the information required and is fourfold. It requires information on a generic description of unit capabilities, generic movement data, details of logistic sustainment and self-sufficiency, and a list of major equipment. It is envisaged that Member States providing resources with a response time of up to 60 days will fill out the planning data sheet completely. The implementation of the planning data sheet has already resulted in a simplification of the Memorandum of Understanding on standby arrangements. The details are covered in a single annex, containing a summary of contributions with a generic description of the resources and their response times. This has obviously, in turn, facilitated the process of signing a Memorandum of Understanding on standby arrangements between the United Nations and the Governments concerned. The Secretariat aims to expand its database once again, by incorporating this additional detailed information from the planning data sheet. This speeds up the planning and deployment of units, which should arrive in the mission area fully equipped and with sufficient provisions to sustain themselves for a period of 60 days.

10. This information may also help in addressing the problem of units that lack the proper equipment. In this regard, the criteria of partnerships need to be emphasized once again, considering the very limited capacity of the Secretariat to maintain equipment made available by Governments to the United Nations and to train United Nations personnel in its use. Such agreements between Governments that need equipment and those ready to provide it, covering and including associated aspects such as training and maintenance, could be made part of a standby arrangement upon participation in the system. The new procedure for determining reimbursement for contingent-owned equipment allows Member States to take the lead in providing support to contingents from another country, support which is subject to reimbursement by the United Nations under pre-established conditions and rates. In this respect, the different initiatives concerning Africa, as demonstrated during the 5 December informal meeting organized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, will lead to increased activity in this area, which it is hoped will in due course be incorporated into the standby arrangements system.

11. The information available under the standby arrangements system proved most helpful in the planning for and subsequent deployment to peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Angola, the former Yugoslavia - in particular the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) - and Guatemala.

V. RESPONSE TIME

12. As response time is a key element in rapid deployment, special efforts are made to urge Member States to reconsider the response time for their pledged resources. Those who have not communicated any response time are simultaneously asked to determine it. The goal is to have more resources fall into the response time bracket of less than 60 days. Response time is defined as the period between the time the request to provide resources is made and the time these resources are ready for air/sealift to the mission area. It thus includes the time required by Governments for domestic political approval and administrative procedures as well as for military preparation.

13. In the interest of reducing the time needed to respond to a crisis, great importance is attached to the development, by a group of States from four continents, led by Denmark, of the Multinational United Nations Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG). This is a formation of up to 5,000 troops, which can be tailored to a given task and may be deployed for up to six months. Once it becomes fully operational, in 1999, it will be capable of deploying in under 30 days. Representatives of some seven nations serve on its steering committee, with five observers. All the forces which SHIRBRIG can draw from will be pledged to the standby arrangements system.

VI. FINAL REMARKS

14. The system of standby arrangements has confirmed its ability to expedite planning by identifying possible troop contributors at an early stage and providing proper, accurate and reliable information to those who have to plan for deployment of troops and equipment. The system has also become most useful as a tool to shorten the time required for the finalization of the Memorandum of Understanding for the provision of personnel, equipment and services in support of peacekeeping operations, by providing the possibility of exchanging in advance the required information through the planning data sheet.

15. The Secretariat is continuing to explore with Member States suitable arrangements for the establishment of a rapidly deployable mission headquarters. Such a headquarters could play an important role in ensuring a quick and effective response to emerging crises.

16. While the United Nations is still far from having a rapid reaction capability, this has been a modest step forward towards one. In this regard, I once again welcome the efforts by Member States to increase the military readiness of troops earmarked for peacekeeping duties. SHIRBRIG, whose Planning Element is now established, is a welcome demonstration of the commitment of the countries involved in these efforts.

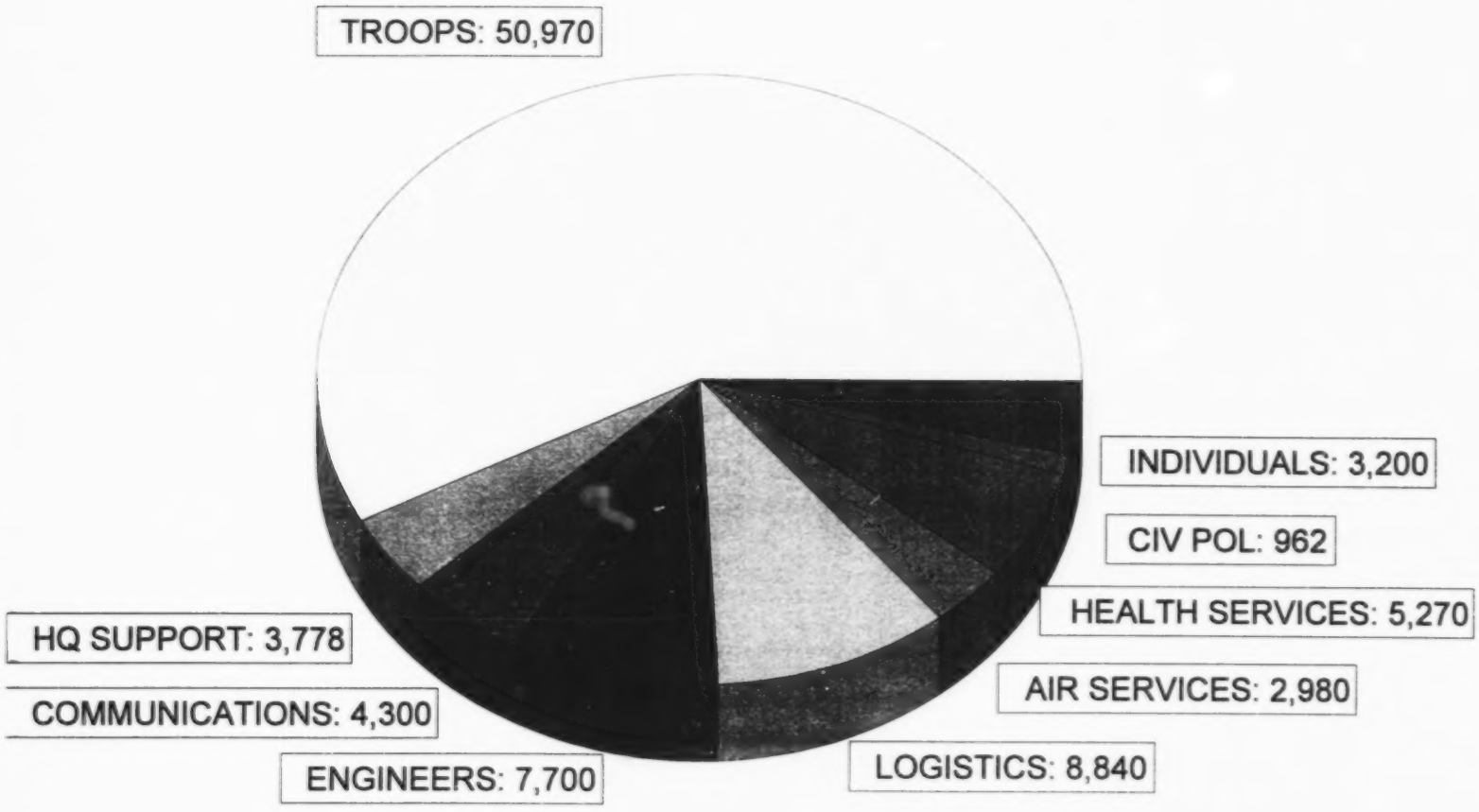
17. The Secretariat will continue to invite all Member States to join the system, regardless of the size of the contribution they can make. The overall goal is to achieve wider participation in and support for the standby arrangements. The Secretariat will also continue to encourage Member States to provide more civilian police personnel and support capacities, mostly in the areas of strategic sea/airlift, communications, multi-role logistics, transport, health services, engineering, mine-clearing and transport utility aircraft. This should contribute to the enhancement of the system that has been and will continue to be used for the planning of peacekeeping operations and will also enhance the Secretariat's ability to obtain a more balanced geographical distribution among the participants in future peacekeeping operations.

Annex I

SBA RESOURCES POOL

(breakdown by functions)

TOTAL: 88,000



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GROUPING OF SBA RESOURCES BY RESPONSE TIME